

*Unitarian Universalist Metro Atlanta North*

*January 31, 2016*

### **Worship Associate's Reflection**

"When we succumb to hatred for each other, then the people who organize [terrorist] attacks have truly won a victory." My cousin Sheila posted this Facebook meme on her timeline just after the Paris bombings. In response, someone, let's call him Frank, posted his opposition to Syrian refugees. This precipitated a caustic back-and-forth within which Frank's core message was, "[Muslims] are polite when they are in [mixed] company. When they get together with their people, they hate Jews."

Many of us who were brought up Jewish, like Sheila, Frank and I, were taught as children to think the worst of Muslims, even in situations where we explicitly have no means to know the truth, such as in the context of private discussions between Muslims. We were taught to categorically set aside all our doubts about the categorical villainy of all Muslims, and we were led to believe that even baseless statements like Frank's should naturally be honored by others. Much of my early spiritual journey was spent unlearning these principles and practices.

Bassem Fakhoury was one of those who recently welcomed a number of UUMAN members to the Roswell Community Masjid Friday noontime Jumuah, and joined us here for a Sunday afternoon

workshop. With regard to the work of unlearning untruths and false dichotomies, he said something very interesting: "Before you can plant seeds of knowledge you must plant seeds of doubt." This can serve as fuel for our fire of commitment to lifelong spiritual development, continually revisiting our beliefs and values and reconsidering whether they could more fully promote the worth and dignity of others, whether we could take our justice work and our compassion to a higher level.

In the Muslim tradition, these levels are expressed roughly as *jihad bil qalb* (*sounds more like qolb*) – struggle of the heart, *jihad bil lisan* (*sounds more like LEE SAN*) – struggle by the tongue, and *jihad bil yad* – struggle by the hand.

On the first level we grow those seeds of doubt into plants that bear seeds of knowledge. We come to know the truth. We come to abhor the injustice and the callousness. If we can do nothing else, let us at least come to detest injustice and callousness.

On the second level, we take a stand. We speak out against the injustice and callousness. We seek to plant the seeds of doubt in others that will hopefully take root and grow. If we can do nothing else, let us at least come to speak out against injustice and callousness.

On the third level, we become agents of change. We take action to foster justice and compassion. We stand on the side of love as a matter of strongly-held conviction, actively working to help heal our broken world.